

*Inspiring Figuratives
for Artists*



Two Hundred and Twenty Five Poses

Volume One

Inspiring Figuratives for Artists: Volume One

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If you wish to sit for figurative photography here in Vancouver, or may want to submit your own figurative photographs, feel free to contact the Editor of ***Inspiring Figuratives for Artists*** at

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Inspiring Figuratives for Artist series

I host a life drawing Atelier here in Vancouver. It has been running in one way shape or form for over twenty years. Artists who want to sketch, paint and sculpt come to do life drawing in the Atelier.

Many of these artists have not had formal training. Nonetheless they enjoy their artistic praxis. Some have gone on to public showing of their work.

The purpose of the *Inspiring Figurative for Artists* series is to provide study materials for the artistic praxis of artists who are trying to master the human form. This book has a mix of modern and vintage Figuratives.

You might ask ... what is the difference between being naked, being nude and being a Figurative? Let me provide an artist's explanation.

Being naked is simply being *sans habillment* (French for *without clothes*). Anyone can take a picture of a naked person and call it art. Is this art?

Being nude is somewhat different than being naked. Being nude is sitting for the purpose of artistry ... but without any sense of surrounding. There are many dozens of 'books for artists' and several websites like *Croquis Café* that just focus on the nude.

Hers is a typical pose from a Croquis Café video:



Is she naked or is she nude? She is perhaps a ballerina, who is posing for the first time. She is trying a bit too hard? And her surroundings are stark

Here is a male model posing at Croquis Café. Is he naked or nude?



Croquis is a French term for a short time pose. Resources such as *Croquis Café* are perhaps a good source of quick sketch material.

The many ‘books for artists’ usually have a hundred pages or more of nudes with nothing around them but white or stark surroundings. Here are two typical nudes from one such ‘book for artists’



The first pose harks back to *Vitruvian Man* – while it is a charming pose, it has very little usefulness to an artist, except perhaps to lead one to wonder why a woman’s arm span does not exactly match her height, the same way a man’s arm span usually does.

I suspect you did not realize this until I pointed it out to you. It has something to do with a fundamental difference between a female and male pelvis. And that

something has to do with a profound difference between the form and function of the two genders.

The second pose is a pose you rarely see *in studio*, even in a teaching studio.



If you do not understand why, then ask your artist friends and see what they say. They might respond by saying that this is a static and facile pose with few challenges that might draw an artist to spend time to render this pose into art. The model is indeed pretty, but at its heart, art is about form and function, not mere ‘sex-appeal.’ ‘Sex-appeal’ is what nakedness is about.

The human form is indeed beautiful, and such ‘books for artists’ do fulfill a purpose, however, most artists quickly become proficient at the rendering of the human form

and then realize they have been drawing objects that are in a disconnect with their surroundings.

When you add colour or a feature to the model then the surroundings begin to form part of the Figurative. Here is a small step forward in one of the ‘books for artists.’



This model, on the other hand, has an active and interesting pose and colour has been added: Her *source de vie* is partly hidden away, leaving some mystery to her. There is also an action line in the curve of her spine. This pose is close to being a *Figurative*.

When it comes to the male form there are few really good works of modern art. There are, of course, the classics like Vitruvian Man by Leonardo da Vinci and sculptures by Michelangelo, as well as his Sistine Chapel art.

In modern times we occasionally come across a few simple male nudes:



But again the model is in a disconnect with their surroundings.

Perhaps only a small percent of nudes are that of the male form, compared to the female form. The reason behind this would be an interesting study in artistic praxis. It is arguably easier to draw the male form than the female form. Perhaps that might be a starting point in such a study?

A photographer that seems to understand what a Figuratives are about, is Peter Hegre. Here is an example of one of his works from a few years ago:



This photograph is a simple composition yet it is not merely a nude. The composition also puts the model into a context.

What then is a *Figurative*?

Instead of providing a long and pedantic definition let me just say that a *Figurative* is a composition of nude and surroundings and is a type of art you see in balanced works by artists like Henri Matisse.

A *Figurative* means that a nude model and their surroundings are not separate, but in fact brought together or integrated in a balanced way. The surroundings have to

be on a balanced term with the model. There has to be a foreground, the model and a background and it has to be in balance.

Here are two examples of Matisse's *Figuratives*, his 1903 *Carmelina*



This piece has all the features of an excellent *Figurative*.

It is not just a painting of a female nude, it is a model in context, right down to the mirror showing us the artist at work, and the contrasting colours red and blue.

It is also Matisse's use of foreground and background, as well as the complementary colours that make this simple painting such a masterpiece. It is subdued compared to his later works, but it does show his genius at work.

Here are two of Matisse's superb Odalisques,



In this drawing Matisse does not resort to colour to provide context. He uses shapes and textures, as well as objects set before us as a form of narrative. It is hardly noticed that she is semi-draped. In fact her femininity is not the first thing we notice in this sketch, nor even the second or third. This is genius!

And this is one of his most famous drawings, his *grande Odalisque*:



It is hard to believe that he did this with pencil. What can you learn from this odalisque? Study it for a minute and then ask yourself how many different elements did Matisse include in this *Figurative*.

He did not arrive at such talent overnight. He developed it slowly and skillfully over several decades. His use of darkness to define the background in this Odalisque is hardly novel, yet one must ask when along the sketching did he begin to define the weighting of the background?

Here is a lovely picture of Matisse *in studio* working with one of his models:



You will notice that Henri Matisse composed his work, before undertaking his art. The surroundings are an integral part of his artistry.

Few modern artists think beyond merely drawing a figure. They do not include the context of the figure, which makes their work seem incomplete or hollow. Perhaps it is because we live in a ‘point and click’ age with digital technology dominating our ‘creative world.’

But let us say we do. It is still impossible to compose a work within the camera, whether that camera is our eye (which is a *camera obscura*), or our mind’s eye, or as a last resort, within the digital camera we hold in front of us?

It is not that difficult to create a *Figurative*.

Here is a simple example where a model and her surroundings are balanced parts of the composition:



This is composed on the landing of a flight of stairs, and this realization brings additional life to the art. From this fact you can draw a narrative; why is she blind-folding herself and what awaits her at the top of the stairs?

There are many classical examples of *Figuratives* which we shall present. Here is an excellent example of a vintage *Figurative* from around 1900:



By its composition, this ‘post card’ *Figurative* tells a story.

Inspiring Figuratives for Artists is a book very much in the Matisse style. As you read this book think in terms of your model and their surroundings and try to compose your work in a complete and balanced fashion.

Inspiring Figuratives for Artists is a series of books to help you with your *Figurative* artistic praxis. If you master the *Figurative* ... it is said you can master art. In each *Figurative* in this book search for vanishing points, as well as form and function. And have a little fun with your artistry.



Several Vancouver based models sat for our Figuratives. All of our models are in their twenties or older.

Inspiring Figuratives for Artists is the first in a series of books for artists wanting to expand their artistic praxis brought to you by *Atelier Press*.

“What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity ... a soothing, calming influence on the mind ...”

Henri Matisse

Female Figuratives

Kate (a.k.a. Kitty)



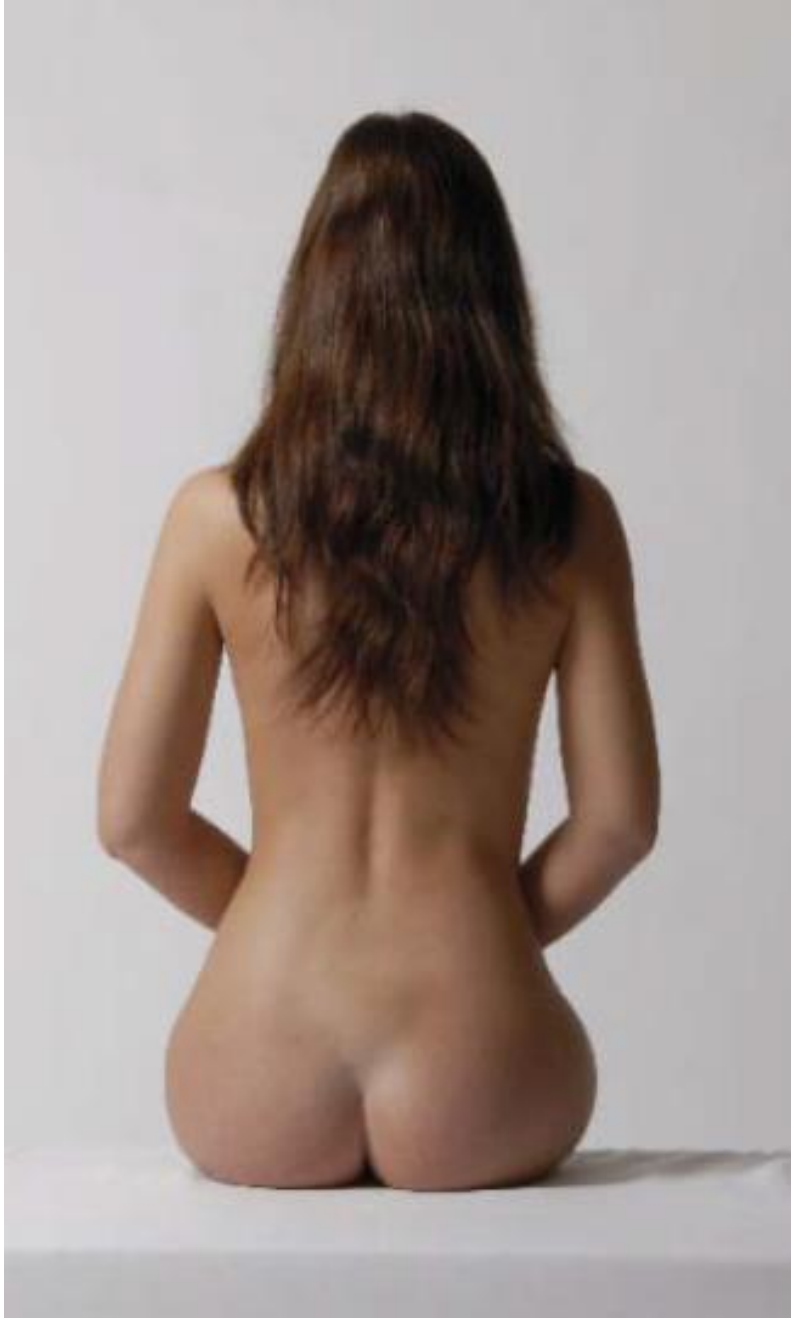








Penny





Chloe





















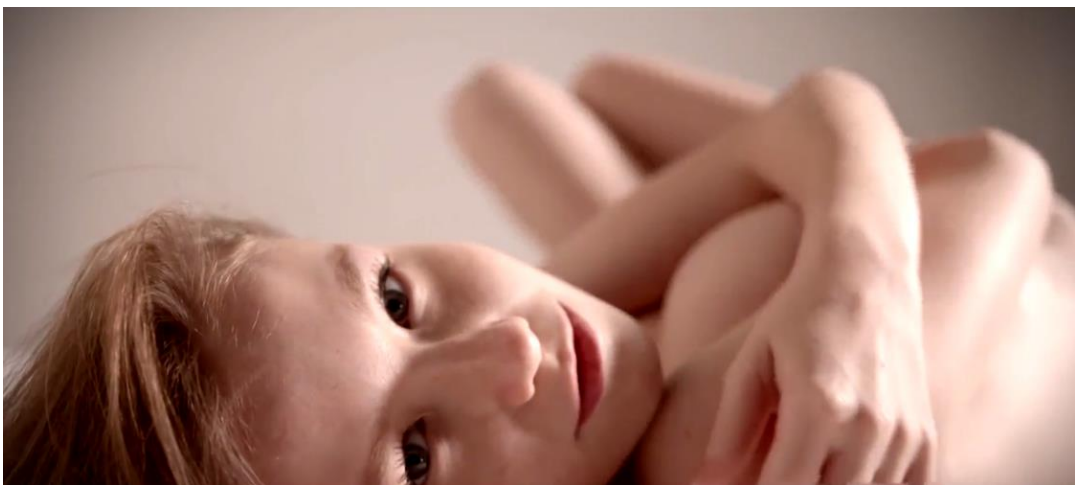
Samantha



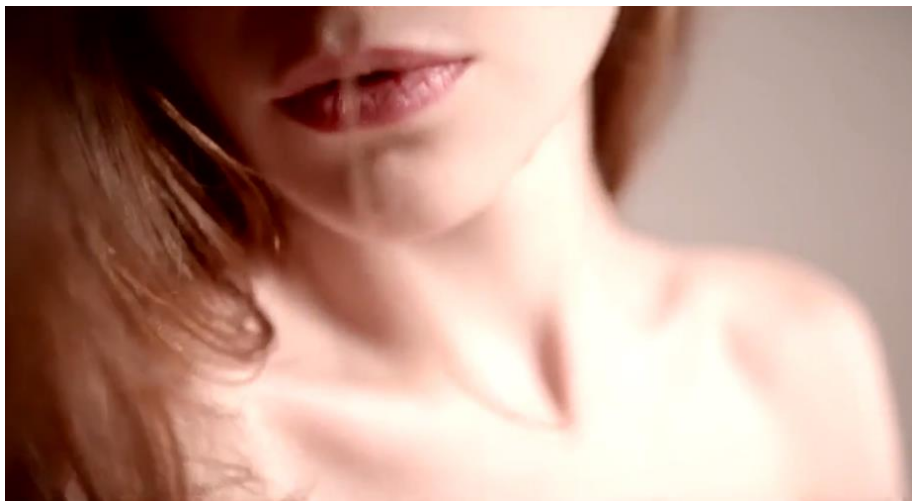












Louise Brooks





Vintage Female Figuratives

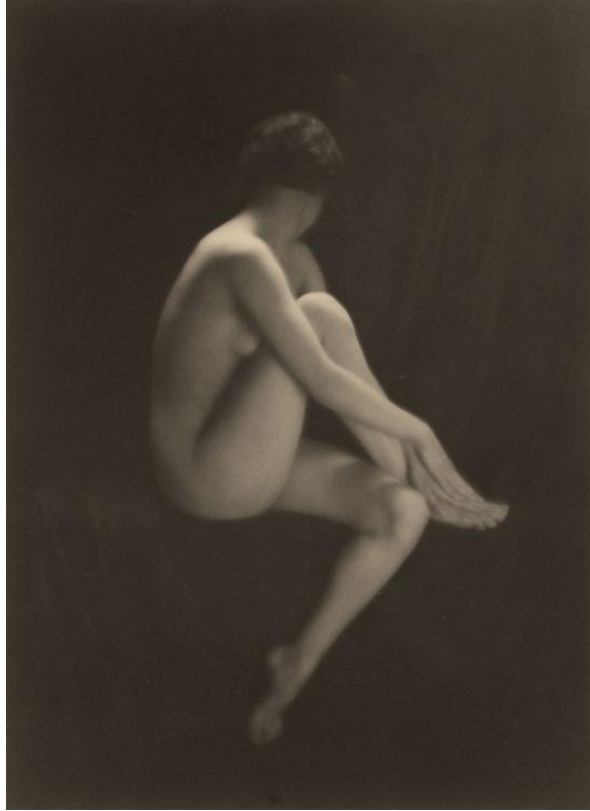












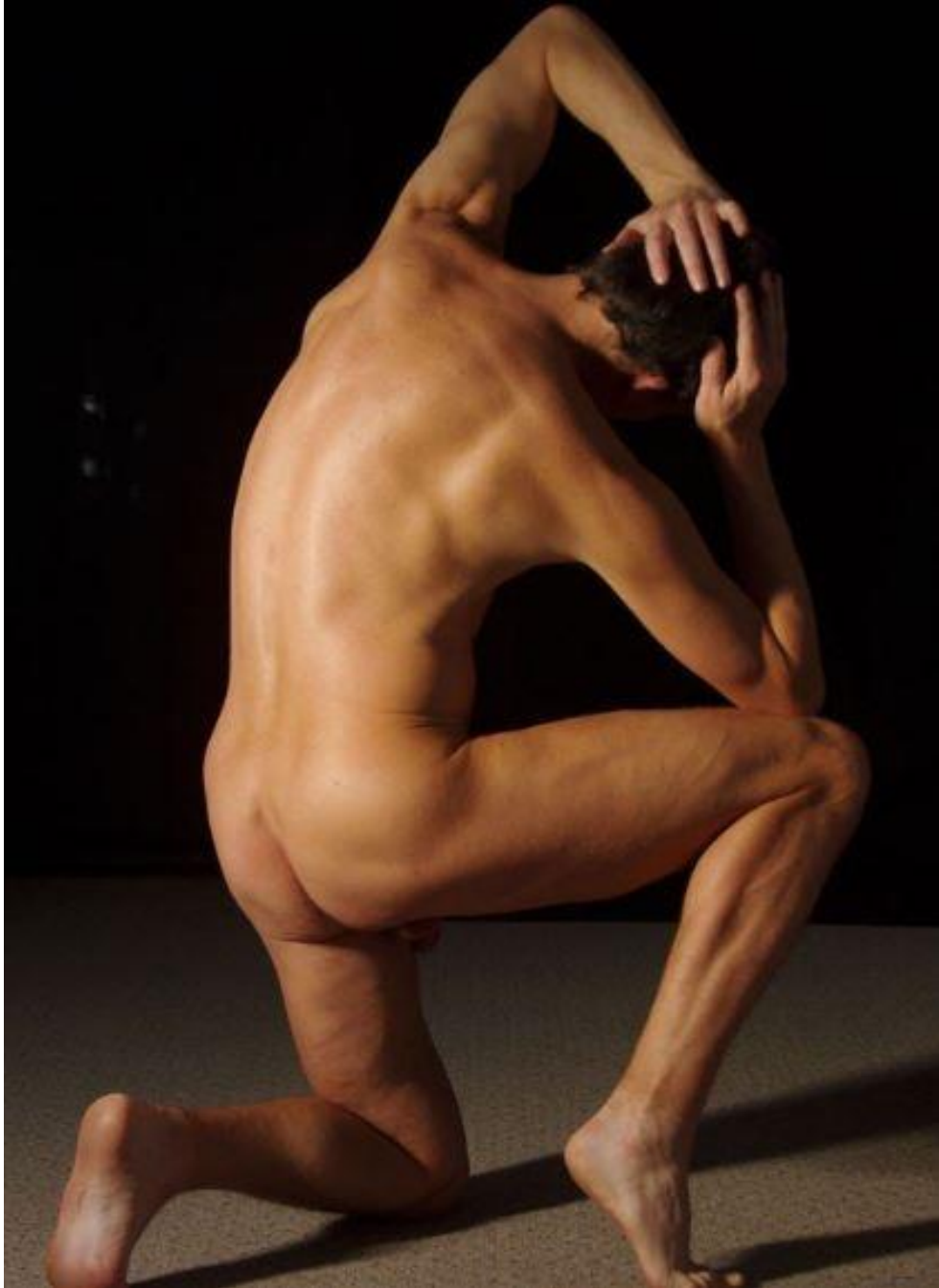






Male Figuratives

Robert







George



Peter



Seymour



David

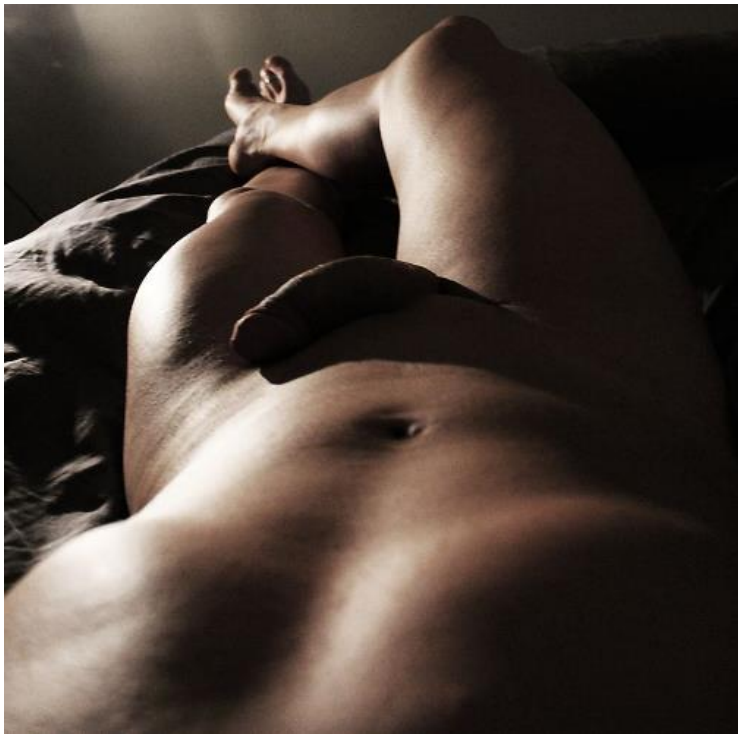




Guillaume







Daniel

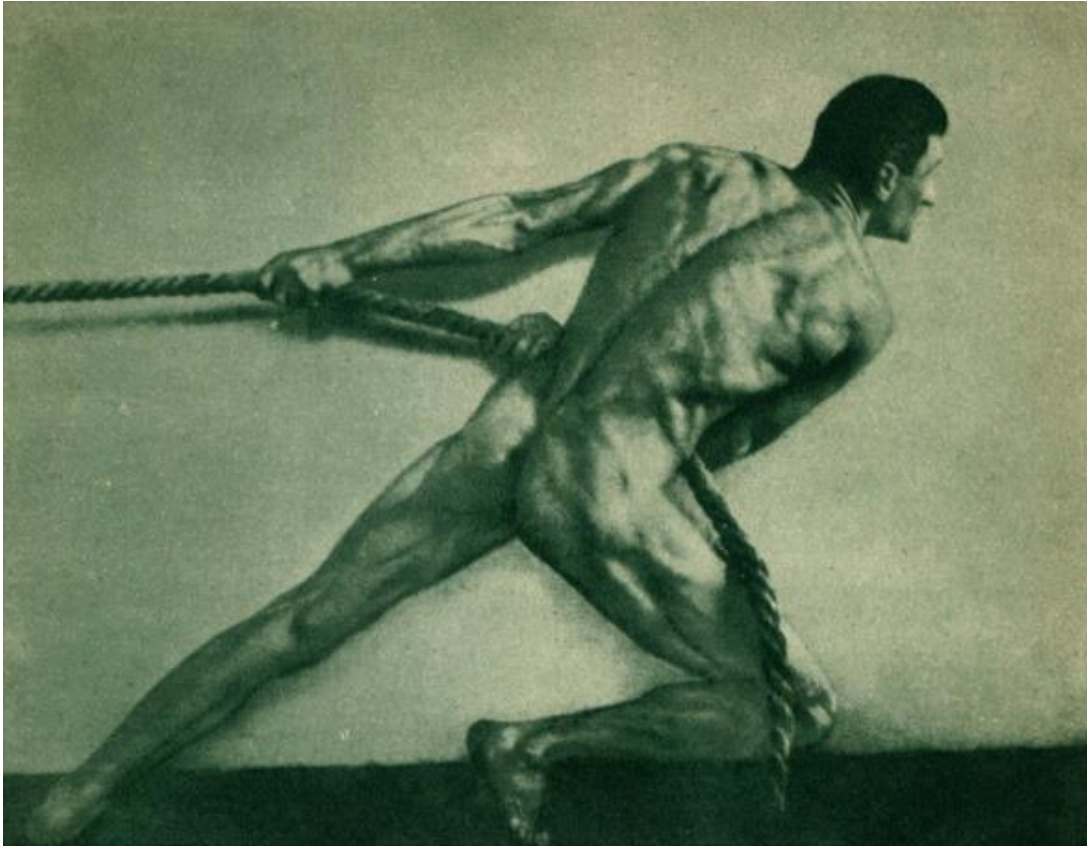


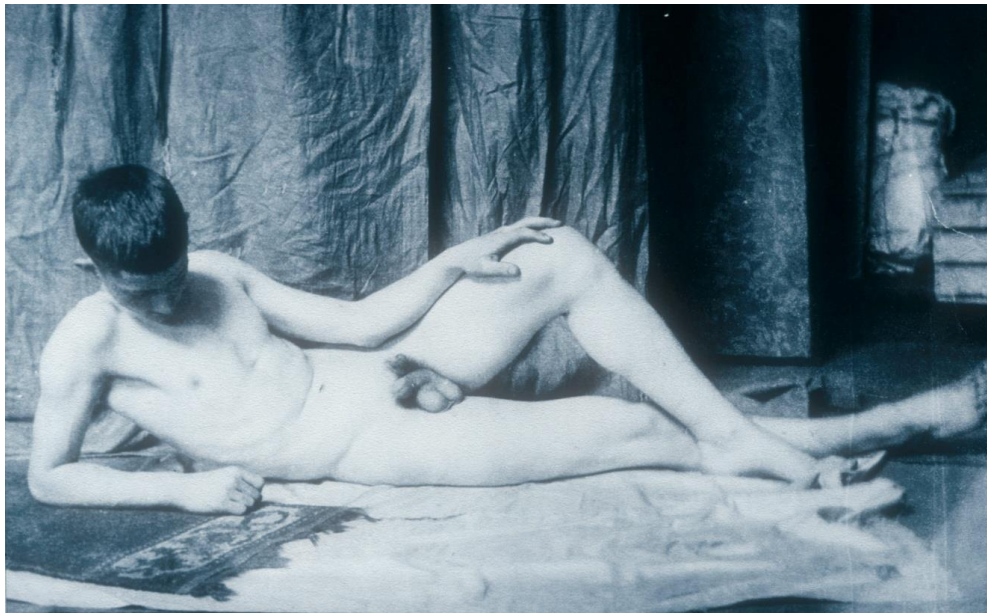


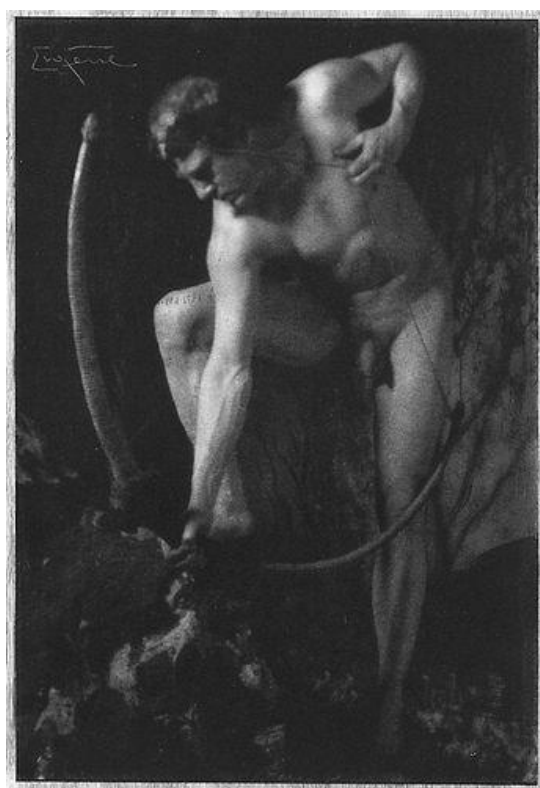
Vintage Male Figuratives





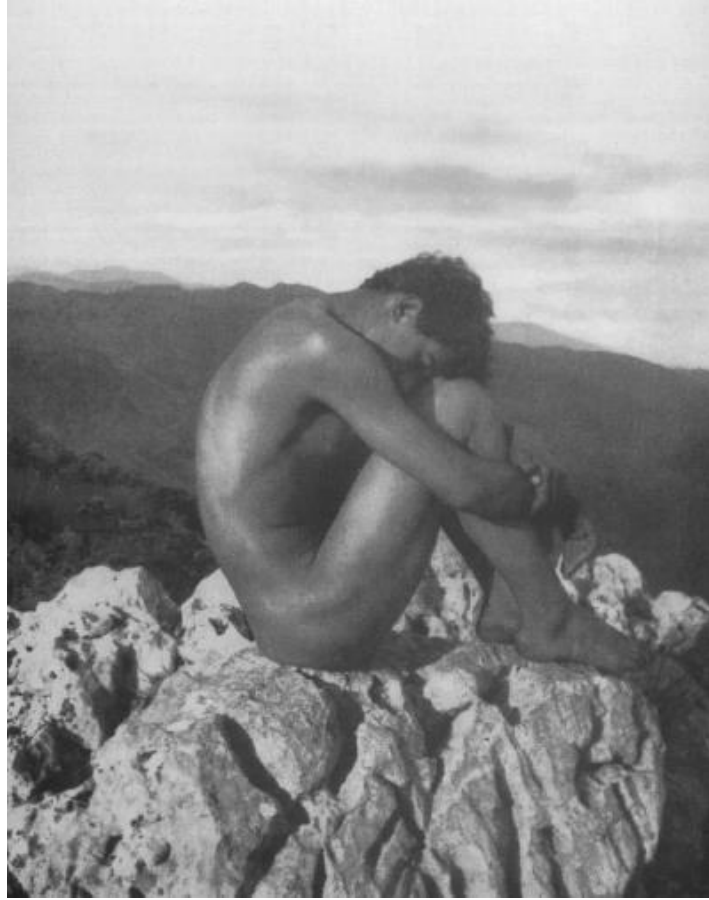
















Male and Female Together























Compositions





























































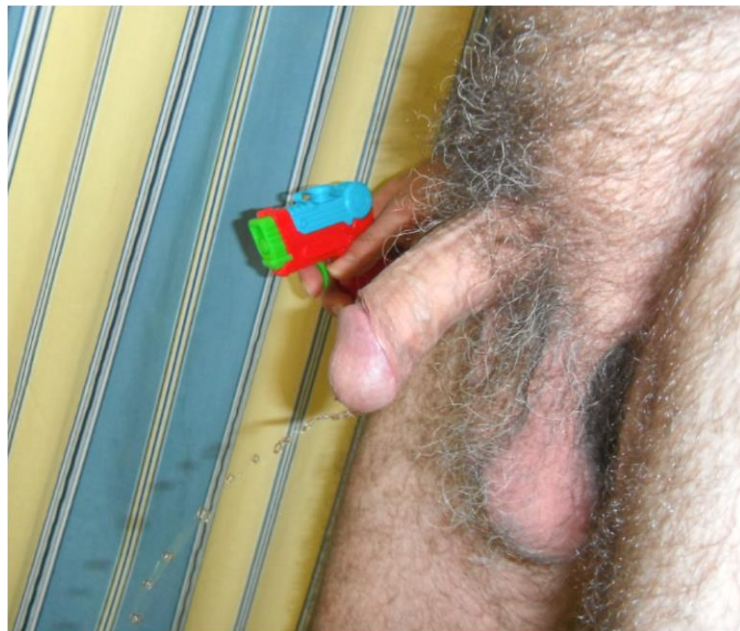










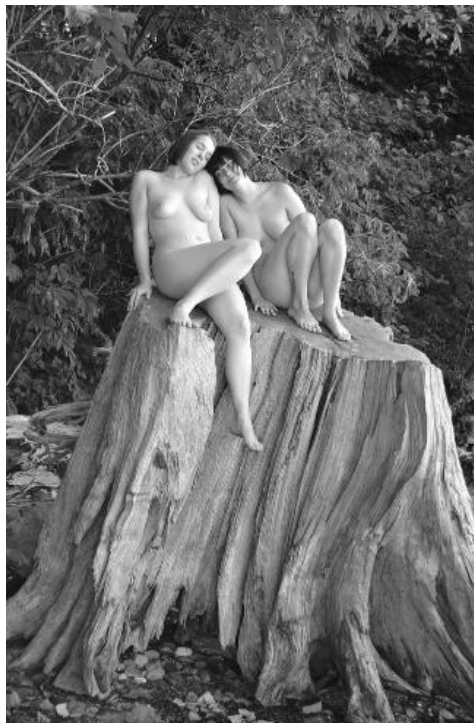








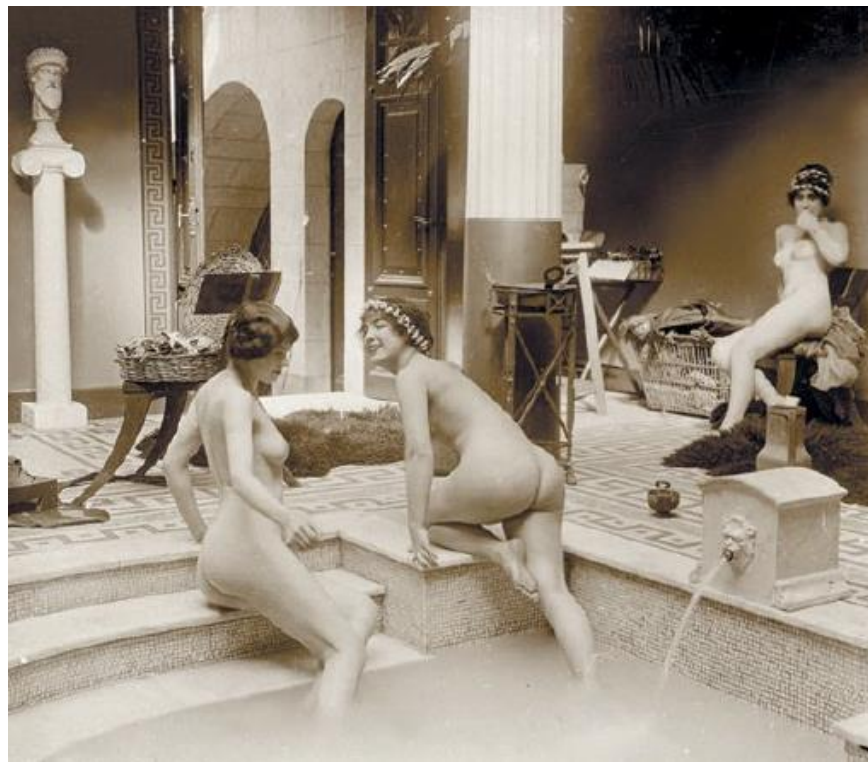




Odalisques and Orientals























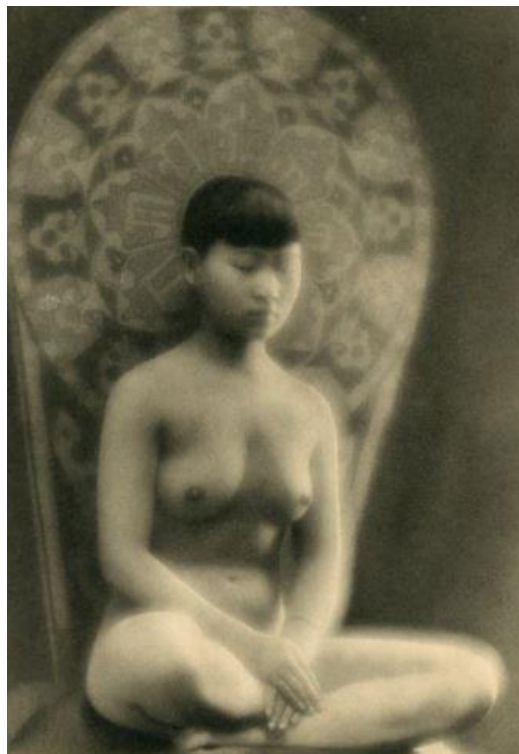
















Action Lines and Three Graces



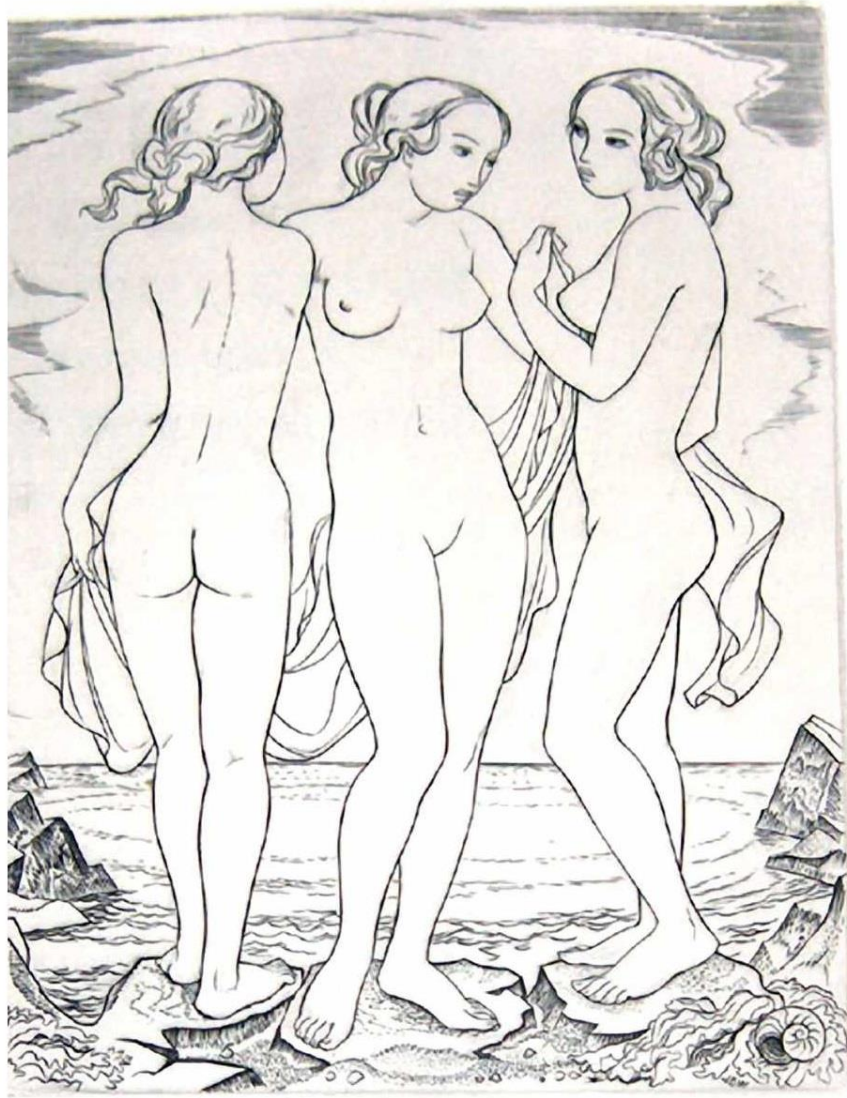












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